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# BUTTE

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THE STORY OF A  
CALIFORNIA  
COUNTY











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*by*

George C. Mansfield

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THE :: STORY :: OF  
BUTTE COUNTY

WHEN we view the cities and towns of Butte County, its orchards and cultivated fields, its railroads and highways, its power plants and factories, we can hardly realize that only a few years ago, comparatively speaking, the land we now know as Butte County was an unmapped wilderness inhabited only by Indians.

And yet this was the case in 1840. And while the period from that time to this may seem a long time to us it is but little more than the average lifetime of a man. As we think of the wonderful transformation of our county from a wilderness into a busy, populous and prosperous commonwealth, and remember that this has come about in the span of a lifetime, we will appreciate how vast is the work that has been done and how much we are indebted to the men and the women whose efforts have secured for us the comforts and the conveniences of the county in which we live.

If we could turn back to the year 1840 we would find no maps showing the rivers and the mountains of the area that we now call Butte County. The rivers were unknown and the mountains largely unnamed. The valley lands were unexplored. The plains were the home of untold thousands of elk, deer, antelopes and wild horses. In the mountains great grizzly bears roamed, making occasional forays into the valley lands below. The primitive red man reigned supreme, without knowledge of the existence of the white man. Along the banks of the rivers and creeks and in the mountain valleys, scores of Indian villages were to be found. This is Butte County as it was only a few decades ago.

EARLY INDIAN LIFE

It will be interesting to learn something of the Indian life of that early and primitive period.

Although called Digger Indians by the whites, the Indians who lived in Butte County as we now know it, belonged to the Maidu or Maideh nation. This nation of Indians extended from the Sacramento River to Honey Lake in Lassen County and from Big Chico Creek to Bear River. It was not a strongly organized nation as we now use the word, but consisted of a large number of separate tribes, the customs of which were largely similar.

Just below Honcut Creek on the east bank of the Feather River were the Hoancut Indians. On the west bank were the

Boka, the Taichida, the Baiyu and the Hoolupai, the latter living opposite the present site of Oroville. On Honcut Creek going up were the Toto and the Helto Indians; on Butte Creek the Eskin; on Chico Creek the Michopdo. In Concow Valley lived the Konkau, once a large and powerful tribe and probably the best representatives of this nation. All these tribes in giving their full designation added the word "Maidu."

The following description of life among these Indians is given by J. W. Powell, who was sent out from Washington to study early life among the California Indians. He writes:

"Although the California Indians lived as peacefully together, perhaps, as any tribes on the continent, they were careful to place their camps or villages so as to prevent surprise. Necessity compelled them to live near a stream or spring. But there were frequently what might be termed hill stations or outposts commanding a still wider prospect, though often some distance from water, in which either the warriors alone or the whole village took up their residence when war was raging. These were generally on bold promontories, overlooking the stream; but there are indications that they contained substantial lodges, and even the dance house or council house, wherein the warriors would assemble for deliberation and perhaps for safety.

"A few words will describe a hamlet. It stands on a gentle knoll besides a living stream. Crowning the knoll the dome-shaped assembly or dance house swells broadly up in the middle of the hamlet. An Indian is occasionally seen passing on all fours in or out of the low-arched entrance. Half a dozen conical, smoke-blackened lodges are scattered over the knoll, each with its side openside on the north to protect its inmates from the sunshine; and rude wickiups or brush awnings stretch raggedly from one to another, or are thrown out as wings on either side. One or more acorn granaries of wickerwork stand around each lodge, much like hogsheads in shape and size, either on the ground or mounted on posts as high as one's head, full of acorns and capped with thatch.

"Drowse, drowse, mope, is the order of the hour. All through the long sweltering days there is not a sound in the hamlet unless it is eternal thump, thump, thump of some squaw pounding up acorns. Within the heavily thatched assembly house it is cool and dark, and here the men lie on the earth floor with their heads pillowed on the low bank around the side; but the women do not enter. For it is forbidden to them except on festival days. They and the children find the coolest place they can on the outside."

Mr. D. F. Crowder, a pioneer of Chico, gives a description of early Indian life and customs, which is filled with interest. We quote:

"The principal diet of the Indians was fish, game and grasshoppers, and in winter they added to their store pinenuts, acorns and wild geese. In the spring months I have seen them eating clover and a grass known as Spanish lettuce. It was an interesting sight to see scores of Indian boys wading and swimming in the creeks and catching fish by the hundreds with their hands. Their dexterity as fishermen was marvelous. The fish were cooked by the older folks, who dug a hole in the ground and built a fire in it. When nothing but the red coals remained, the fish were placed in the hole—uncleaned—and covered with a coating of earth. When the fish were cooked, the dirt was taken away and the fish eaten without even the preliminary of removing their heads or fins.

"But the most interesting method of getting food was the catching of grasshoppers. These pests were considered toothsome and dainty,

and were highly prized. Their method of catching these grasshoppers was most unique. The first thing done when a hopper harvest was to be reaped was to dig a deep funnel-shaped hole some four or five feet deep. Then the Indians, both men and women, would make themselves large brooms or sweeps out of small willows tied together at one end and hanging loose at the other. The Indians, sometimes a hundred in number, would spread out in a circle around the hole. Inside the circle would be encompassed at least thirty or forty acres. At a signal they would all commence to sweep toward the goal, driving the hoppers before them. When close to the hole, the sweeping was fast and furious, and the insects were finally swept into the hole. No sooner was the last hopper in than the Indians would jump in on top of them, barefooted, and mash them down. The top layer of the grasshoppers, several feet thick, would become a thick mush. Then the feed would commence. The Indians seemed to enjoy the meal greatly and ate vast quantities of them. When the feast was over the squaws would take the remainder and dry them, so that they could be eaten later.

"Acorn meal also formed a large part of the Indian's food. They gathered the acorns in the fall of the year and after they were dried they were ground into meal by grinding them in large stones which had been hollowed out. This work was done by the women, and they used a stone pestle to do the grinding with. To cook the acorn meal a pan-shaped hole was made in the earth, which was lined with mud so that it was watertight. Stones were then heated and placed in the water until it was brought to the boiling point, after which the acorn meal was placed in the water and mush was formed. This, when cooked, they would dip out with a willow basket and eat.

"Pinenuts also formed a part of their food.

"Salmon were caught by the use of a spear which had a detachable point made of deer's horn. The point was tied in the center with a deer skin thong string, which was fastened several feet from the end of the pole. When the point entered a fish, it would leave the pole and twist crossways in the salmon's body, and being held to the pole by the thong, the fish could not get away."

## CEREMONIAL DANCES

These Indians had many dances and ceremonies, some of which all observed and some of which were peculiar customs of a particular tribe. These dances were intended as a prayer to the Supreme Being for bountiful crops and a good hunting season, or were memorial dances for the dead. Thus there were the Acorn Dance and the Manzanita Dance, which were supplications for good crops of acorns and manzanita berries. And there was the Dance for the Dead, which still survives in what we now know as "Indian Burnings." At these memorial dances great quantities of baskets and clothing would be burned for the dead.

Jacob Patterson of Oroville, also a pioneer of the county, adds some interesting information regarding Indian life as he observed it when he first came here in 1853. At that time, he states, there were Indian rancherias practically over the entire county. One of the largest was near Hamilton Bend on the Feather River, where approximately 300 Indians lived. These settlements varied in size from groups of twenty to rancherias running into the hundreds. The home of the Indians were made of long strips of bark,

erected in a conical shape over a dugout two feet or so in depth. There was a little round hole in the top for the smoke. These were called sweat houses. The Indians painted their faces with a sort of pitch, which won for them the name "tarfaces" among the early miners.

When Mr. Patterson first came here the Indians wore little or no clothing, but they soon began to visit the various mining camps and took the discarded clothing of the miners. This they would wear without any regard to the prevailing customs among the whites. Two or three pairs of trousers would be worn at one time, if the Indian was lucky enough to be given those articles of apparel by the miners. The same lack of ordinary rule prevailed with other articles of clothing. The Indian, thus clad, would go into the sweat house or the open sun, and soon would discard the clothing. The result was an appalling mortality from colds, pneumonia and other diseases. In one little rancheria near Cherokee, Mr. Patterson states that forty Indians died one winter from pneumonia. The same fatality went on over the whole county.

J. W. Powell, who investigated and wrote a report for the Government upon Indian life in California, in which he described at length the tribes of the Maidu nation, says this of their life:

"Of all the droning and dreary lives that even the mind of man conceived, the life of the savage is the most dreary. Savages are not more sociable than civilized men and women, but less. They talk very fast when some matter excites them, but for the most part they are vacuous, inane, silent. So satiated with sleep that they can sleep no more, they pass the hours in silence, sitting and brushing off the flies. I lived nearly two years in sufficient proximity to them and I give it as the result of extended observations that they sleep day and night together, from fourteen to sixteen hours out of the twenty-four. They lie down at nightfall because they have no lights; and they seldom rise before the sun, and in summer generally an hour or two after. During the day they are constantly drowsing. When on the march they frequently chatter a good deal; but when a halt is called, they all drop on the ground as if overcome by the heat and sink into a torpid silence."

## COMING OF THE WHITE MEN

The real occupation of the Northern Sacramento Valley by the white man probably should be considered as dating from 1849, for it was in that year that the first big emigration of gold hunters arrived. But prior to that time men of the white race had been in the Sacramento Valley and had traversed the Butte County area. In its issue of July 25, 1879, an Oroville newspaper published an account of the discovery of an ancient manuscript in the cavity of a tree upon the Middle Fork of the Feather River. As far as is known this is the first record of the visit of white men to this portion of the State. The article is of sufficient interest to justify its reproduction in full. We quote as follows:

"While chopping up an oak tree that had been fallen for the purpose of obtaining lumber for a cabin, James Reynolds and Joseph McCarty,



two miners working on the Middle Fork of the Feather River, last Thursday found in a cavity in the interior of the tree a piece of parchment eight by fourteen inches in dimensions, both sides of which were covered with heiroglyphics as they thought except the figures '1542.' This parchment was later sold to F. M. Sastromjo of Madrid, Spain, who stated that the parchment was written in Spanish and contained an account of the wanderings, trials and tribulations of three men named Emanuel Sagosta, Jose Gareljos and Sebastian Murillo, deserters from the command of Ferdinand De Soto; that they were at the time of writing the sole survivors of a party of thirteen who deserted in 1539, and that the account was written and put into the knot hole of the oak tree on August 29, 1842; that the party was discouraged and had no idea where their steps were leading them. The parchment was of a dark cream color, the writing being easily perceived. It was sent to the National Historical Society of Spain. The outer edge of the cavity was within about five inches within the tree, which had grown over and enclosed the hole."

The first real exploration of the valley, however, began in 1820, when, acting under orders from the Governor of California, Captain Arguello ascended the Sacramento River in that year and proceeded as far north as the Hudson Bay settlements. He discovered the Sutter Buttes.

From 1825 to 1840 trappers of the Hudson Bay Company and representatives of the American fur companies roamed the valley. Michael Frambois saw the buttes in 1829 and gave to them the name that they have since retained.

That General Fremont also was in the Butte County area during his exploration of Northern California, was evident from discovery in an oak tree west of Biggs of a sealed can containing a note stating that General Fremont and his party had camped beneath that tree. This note was found by Alexander Dick.

Such are the shadowy beginnings of the occupation of the Butte County area by the whites.

## FIRST SETTLEMENTS

In the early years of the decade between 1840 and 1850 the actual settlement of the territory known as Butte County by men of the white race was started. During these years there were a number of grants of large tracts of land made by the Mexican Government to various persons. A number of these grants were located in the territory that now comprises our county. It may be of interest to enumerate these grants:

The Boga-Larkin Grant was founded upon a Mexican grant to Charles W. Flugge which was made in 1844 by Governor Micheltorena. The grant contained five square leagues or 22,184.66 acres. The land covered by this grant extended along the Feather River from the Ord Ranch south to Sutter County and out into the valley between two and three miles.

The Farwell Grant was founded upon a Mexican grant to Edward A. Farwell, also made in 1844 by Governor Micheltorena.

It contained 22,193.93 acres. The land covered by this grant extended along the Sacramento River south from Chico Creek about four or five miles. A great portion of the city of Chico is located on a portion of this grant.

The Arroyo Chico Grant was founded on a grant made to William Dickey in 1844 by Governor Micheltorena, and contained 22,214.47 acres. The land covered by the grant extended east from the Sacramento River along Chico Creek to the north end of the Bidwell Park and northerly from Chico Creek a distance of two or three miles. The Bidwell subdivisions, including Chico Vecino, are on this grant, as is the famous Hooker Oak and the Bidwell mansion.

The Esquon Grant was founded on a grant made to Samuel Neal in 1844. It contained 22,193.78 acres and covered the land along Big Butte Creek from the Durham State Colony on the north to the town of Nelson on the south.

The Bosquejo Grant was made to Peter Lassen in December, 1844. It comprised 22,206.67 acres. A portion of this grant lies in Butte and a part in Tehama County.

The Aguas Frias or Pratt Grant was founded on a grant made to Salvador Osio in 1844. It comprised 26,761.40 acres. The land covered by this grant extended from a point just south of the town of Durham to a point in Glenn County west of Butte Creek.

The Llano Secor, or Parrott Grant, was founded upon a Mexican grant to Sebastian Kauser made in 1845 by Governor Pio Pico. It comprised 17,767.17 acres. The land covered by this grant extended along the Sacramento River for about four miles to the Aguas Frias Rancho.

The Fernandez Grant was founded upon a grant made by Governor Pio Pico in 1846 to two sons of Senor Fernandez, alcalde of Monterey in 1841 and 1842. It comprised 17,805.84 acres. The land covered by this grant extended from a point immediately north of the Oroville bridge across the Feather River south along the Feather River to what is now known as the Ord Ranch, and out into the valley west of the Feather River about two miles. Thermalito and Rio Bonito are located upon this grant.

## EARLY CALIFORNIA LIFE

General Bidwell in his reminiscences describes life in California at that time as follows:

"The kindness and the hospitality of the early Californians have not been overstated. Up to the time the Mexican regime ceased in California, they had a custom of never charging for anything, that is to say, for entertainment, food, use of horse, and so forth. You were supposed, even if invited to visit a friend, to bring your blankets with you, and one would be very thoughtless if he travelled and did not take a knife with him to cut his meat. When you had eaten, the invariable custom was to rise, deliver to the women or hostess the plate upon which you had eaten the meat and beans—for that was about all they had—and say 'Muchas

gracias, Senora' (many thanks, madame), and the hostess invariably replied, 'Bueno provecho' (may it do you much good). The missions in California invariably had gardens with grapes, olives, figs, pomegranates, pears and apples, but the ranches scarcely ever had any fruit. When you wanted a horse to ride you would take it to the next ranch—it might be twenty, thirty or fifty miles—and turn it out there, and sometime or other in reclaiming his stock the owner would get it back. In this way you might travel from one end of California to the other.

"The ranch life was not confined to the country. It prevailed in the towns, too. There was not a hotel in San Francisco or Monterey or anywhere in California until 1846, when the Americans took the country. The priests at the missions were glad to entertain strangers without charge. They would give you a room in which to sleep and perhaps a bedstead with a hide stretched across it, and over that you would spread your blankets.

"At this time there was not in California any vehicle except a rude California cart. The wheels were without tires and were made by felling an oak tree and hewing it down till it made a solid wheel nearly a foot thick on the rim and a little larger where the axle went through. The hole for the axle would be nearly eight or nine inches in diameter, but a few years' use would increase it to a foot. These carts were always drawn by Mexican oxen, the yoke being lashed by rawhide to the horns. To lubricate the axles they used soap (that is one thing the Mexicans could make), carrying along for the purpose a big pail of thick soap suds; but you could generally tell when a California cart was coming half a mile away by the squeaking. I have seen the families of the wealthiest people go long distances at the rate of thirty miles or more a day, visiting, in one of these clumsy two-wheeled vehicles. When Governor Micheltorena was sent from Mexico to California he brought with him an ambulance, not much better than the common spring wagon that a market man would now use with one horse. It had shafts, but in California at that time there was no horse broken to work in them, nor was there such a thing known as a harness. So the Governor had two mounted vaqueros to pull it, their reatas being fastened to the shafts and to the pommels of their saddles."

On the grants, to which reference has already been made, cattle raising was the sole business of the grant holders. The Spanish cattle, distinguished by their long horns and small bodies, roamed the plains. They were valuable only for their hides, which were shipped on flat-bottomed boats down the river to Benicia. Agriculture, as it is now practiced, was unknown.

This was the primitive civilization of early California. And at the very outer edge of that civilization lay the Butte County area.

## THE DISCOVERY OF GOLD

In 1848 the Butte County area lay basking in the balmy sunshine of a California spring. A handful of whites and some thousands of Indians comprised its population. Quiet content reigned supreme. Then suddenly at the clarion cry of "Gold! Gold!" all was changed. A new civilization sprang almost whole-grown into being. Thousands of emigrants, representing almost every nation of the world, in the course of two years crowded to the banks of Butte County's golden streams, and a feverish confusion took possession of all within her boundaries. For just as Marshall's

discovery of gold at Coloma started a rush of gold hunters to the American River, so John Bidwell's discovery of gold started a great stream of travel in that direction. The year 1848 is epochal in the history of Butte County. Just back of it lay the quiet, primitive civilization of California's Indian and Mexican days. Just before it lay the bustling, striving, struggling civilization of the Anglo-Saxon occupation. In a year's time the magic touch of gold had transformed the whole order of the people's life.

Toward the latter part of March, 1848, shortly after the discovery of gold upon the American River by James Marshall, John Bidwell went to Coloma and there saw for himself the scene of Marshall's "strike." A keen observer and a careful student, Bidwell at once saw that conditions at Coloma were apparently similar to conditions upon the Feather River. Bidwell returned to the grant that he had previously purchased at what is now the site of Chico, called his neighbors together and told them of his belief that gold was to be found in the gravels of the Feather River. A prospecting party was formed, and in a short time the news of the discovery of gold on the Feather River was heralded to the world.

General Bidwell, in his reminiscences, tells the story of the discovery as follows:

"On my return to Chico I stopped over night at Hamilton on the west bank of the Feather River. On trying some of the sand in the river I found light particles of gold and reckoned that if light gold could be found so far down that the heavier particles would remain near the hills. On reaching Chico an expedition was organized, but it took some time to get everything ready. We had to send twice up to Peter Lassen's mill to get flour; meat had to be dried; and we had to send to Sacramento for tools. Our party was made up of Mr. Dickey, Potter, John Williams, William Northgraves and myself. We passed near Cherokee and up the North Fork. In nearly all of the places we prospected we found colors. One evening while encamped at White Rocks, Dickey and I in a short time panned out about an ounce in fine gold. The others refused to prospect any and said that the gold that we obtained was so light it would not weigh anything. At that time we were all unfamiliar with the weight of gold dust, but I am satisfied what we had would weigh an ounce. At length we came home and some of them went to the American River to mine. Dickey, Northgraves and I went to what is now Bidwell Bar, and there found gold and went to mining."

Hon. Warren T. Sexton, who was for a number of years the Superior Judge of Butte County, in his recollections of early days gives additional details of this noteworthy expedition as follows:

"Bidwell made his camp at Bidwell's Bar, which still bears his name. Potter, from the Farwell Grant, camped at Potter's Bar on the North Fork of the Feather River about two miles from Bidwell. Neal selected what was afterwards known as Adams Bar or Adamstown on the main river directly opposite Long's Bar. Davis, from the Lassen Ranch on Deer Creek, camped on the main river just below Morris Ravine near Thompson's Flat. It would be only guesswork to state the amount of gold taken out by these first miners. That it was very large, there is no doubt. Some stories made it fabulous."



## THE FIRST EMIGRANTS

The first emigrants to reach the Feather River District came from Oregon. This emigration left its mark in the name Oregon City.

News of the discovery of gold soon spread, and foreign countries heard of the new El Dorado even before the East learned of Marshall's discovery. Instead of a handful of whites and some thousands of Indians, the Butte County area soon comprised as motley a population as could be found anywhere. Yankees, Southerners, English, French, Germans, Mexicans, Spaniards, Hawaiians, Peruvians, Chilenos, all were to be found here bound together by one common tie, the lust for gold.

Concerning this early emigration Bancroft, in his history of California, has the following to say:

"Although the Americans maintained the ascendancy in numbers owing to readier access to the field, the stream of emigration from foreign countries was great, a current coming to New York and other places to join the flow from there. Among the Asiatic nations, the most deeply affected were the Chinese. With so much of the gambling element in their dispositions, and so much of ambition, they turned over the tidings in their mind with feverish impatience, whilst their neighbors, the Japanese, heard of the discovery with stolid indifference. Not less affected were the inhabitants of the Marquesas Islands. Those of the French colony who were free made immediate departure, and were quickly followed by the military, leaving the Governor alone to represent the government. On reaching Australia the news was eagerly circulated and embellished by shipmasters. The streets of the chief cities were placarded with 'Gold! Gold. Gold in California.' Soon it became difficult to secure berths upon departing vessels. So in Peru and Chile, where the California revelation was unfolded as early as September, 1848, by Colonel Mason's messenger on his way to Washington, bringing a large influx in advance of the dominant United States immigration."

A concise summary of the immigration of the year 1848 is given by the same author and is of particular interest by way of comparison with the great immigration that started in 1849. We quote as follows:

"The year 1848 has its individuality. It is different from every other California year before or since. The men of '48 were of another class from the men of '49. Those first at the mines were the settlers of California Valley, many of them with their families and Indian retainers. They were neighbors and friends, who would not wrong each other more in the mountains than in the valley. After the quiet inflowing from the valley adjacent to the gold fields came the exodus from San Francisco, which began in May. In June San Jose, Monterey and the middle region contributed their quota, followed in July and August by the southern settlements. The predominance thus obtained from the start by the Anglo-American element was well sustained, partly from the fact that it was more attracted by the glitter of gold than the lavish and indolent ranchero of Latin extraction, and less restrained from yielding to it by the ties of family and possessions. The subsequent influx during the season from abroad preponderated in the same direction. It began in September, although assuming no large proportions until two months later. The first flow came from the Hawaiian Islands, followed by a large stream from

Oregon and a broad current from Mexico and beyond, notably of Sonorans, who counted many experienced miners in their ranks."

During the year 1848 there was not, however, the wild stampede to the gold diggings that marked the later years. Mining in the Feather River diggings was largely a neighborhood affair at first. The latter part of the year 1849 saw the beginning of the great rush. Over the Plains, across the Isthmus, around the Horn, came an eager throng of gold hunters, fired by accounts of the California diggings that had appeared in the press. The nature of these reports may be judged from the following article that appeared in the New York Journal of Commerce, dated Monterey, August 29, 1848, which is typical of the reports which began to be circulated: "At present," said the article, "the people are running over the country and picking the gold out of the earth here and there just as though a thousand hogs let loose in a forest would root up groundnuts. Some get eight or ten ounces a day, and the least active one or two. They make the most who employ the wild Indians to hunt it for them. There is one man who has sixty Indians in his employ. His profits are a dollar a minute. The wild Indians know nothing of the value of gold and wonder what the palefaces want to do with it. They will give an ounce of it for the same weight of coined silver, or a thimbleful of glass beads or a glass of grog. I know seven men who worked two weeks and two days, Sundays excepted, on the Feather River. They employed on an average fifty Indians, and got out in these two weeks and two days two hundred and seventy-five pounds of pure gold. I know the men and have seen the gold. I know ten other men who worked ten days in company, employed no Indians, and averaged in these ten days \$1500 each. I know another man who got out of a basin in a rock not larger than a washbowl, two and one-half pounds of gold in fifteen minutes." These letters ran through papers all over the country, creating wonder and amazement everywhere.

## THE OVERLAND TRAVEL

In the year 1849 the first great overland travel reached the gold diggings. The story of this great trip across the plains is one of the most interesting chapters in the history of the development and the expansion of the United States. It is a story of danger and daring, of hardship and suffering, of great successes and heart-breaking disappointments.

The main route to the gold diggings, once California was reached, was through Hangtown, now called Placerville. The fact that gold was first discovered upon the American River gave to the diggings there a maximum of publicity, and naturally the American River gold field was the objective of large numbers of these emigrants. To the north, however, new trails were established. Three of these ran through the confines of the present

Butte County. There was the Lassen (or Lawson) Horn route, which ran north from the Humboldt Valley in Nevada and crossed into California through the Pitt River Canyon, and then ran south to the gold diggings. There was the Lassen Trail, which entered the State by way of Deer and Mill Creek, emerging upon the valley at where Vina now stands. There was the Beckwith route, named after Jim Beckwourth, a trapper and scout. This followed approximately the route of the Western Pacific through Beckwith Pass to the American Valley in Plumas County, and then followed approximately the present Oroville-Quincy highway. In the later Fifties a new route was largely used from Honey Lake Valley via Humbug and the Magalia Ridge to Pentz and thence to Oroville.

The Lassen Trail by way of the Deer Creek and Mill Creek ridge was first travelled by the party of which Judge Lott and Judge Sexton were members. Emigrants on this trail were harassed by the Mill Creek Indians. W. A. Ward, founder of a well known Oroville family, later came to California by this route. Upon the whitened bones of dead animals they found written warnings, "Beware! Bad Indians here!"

The discovery of the Lassen and Beckwith Trails resulted in the abandonment of the Lassen Horn route, which received its name by reason of its similarity to the trip around Cape Horn. There are no figures available as to the amount of emigration over the two emigrant routes. It is certain that a large proportion of the travel went by way of the Placerville route. Up until the middle of the decade of 1850-60 the travel over the Beckwith route appears to have been considerable. Thus the Butte Record gives the emigration passing through Bidwell Bar over that route during the year 1854 as 1200 people, comprising 200 families, who brought with them 12,000 head of cattle, 700 sheep, and 500 horses and mules.

After 1855 the travel by way of the Beckwith Pass slackened. This is ascribed to the construction of a railroad across the Isthmus of Panama, which attracted the bulk of the emigration which did not have cattle to drive west. Moreover among those driving cattle there appeared to be a suspicion of the route by reason of the fact that emigrants had lost cattle along this route from certain poisonous plants growing there.

All of you doubtless have heard stories of the dangers and hardships faced and endured by those who crossed the Plains to come to California. But the hardships of these early emigrants were not ended when they reached California. The first winters were very severe, the housing was inadequate, there were no roads upon which to bring up supplies, and the men suffered untold hardships.

## HOW THE MINING AREA SPREAD

It is hard for the student of history to keep pace with the feverish activity of the miners upon their arrival here. Discoveries of gold-bearing gravel followed other discoveries in such rapid succession that it is impossible to record these discoveries in their chronological sequence. Miners left the main streams to prospect in ravines, and found these ravines to be rich in gold. From the ravines they went into creeks. High on the hills they found gold, and gave to these discoveries, which were away from streams, the name of "dry diggings." They left diggings immensely rich for other diggings reported to be richer. For it must be remembered that the miner of 1849 and 1850 had but little baggage to bother him. He was free to move where and when he pleased. Moreover these early miners, speaking generally, had but little knowledge of mineralogy or geology. They saw that the flakes of gold and nuggets had come down the stream from higher up in the mountains. They believed that when the source of gold was found, a mountain of pure gold probably would be discovered.

All the early evidence bears out the fact that good diggings would be abandoned with the utmost recklessness at the mere rumor of better diggings somewhere else. Diggings that would only yield \$20 a day to the man were not considered worth while working at first. And diggings that would yield \$50 or \$100 to the man were abandoned with a recklessness which itself bespoke the profusion of gold. But this was not an unmixed evil. The very recklessness with which diggings were abandoned was one of the big factors that led to new discoveries and to the enlargement of the mining area.

## SOME EARLY BUTTE TOWNS

A characteristic feature of this early period was the establishment of "mushroom towns." Thus in this period when society was in process of its first formation, towns arose and disappeared. Communities that flourished one week would vanish the next as completely as if the earth had swallowed them. For timber in the early diggings was scarce and sawmills few; and so when a miner moved to new diggings, if not too far away, he would literally carry his house with him, and often not a mark would be left to indicate where a "city" had stood.

Probably few of you have ever heard the names of some of these early cities. One was Veazie City, another Fredonia, and still another Yatestown. Ophir was located on the present site of Oroville. There was a city named Troy, but its location has been forgotten even more completely than its famous namesake. Columbia was a city on the north bank of the Feather River between Oroville and Hamilton. There was another town on the



Sacramento River near Deer Creek, but pioneers have even forgotten what its name was.

The Alta Daily Californian of San Francisco in its issue of September 27, 1855, had an interesting account of the establishment of Oroville, which describes the character of town building during this period. Says that paper: "Mining towns, like mushrooms, spring up in a night. A party of prospecting miners strike a good lead and pitch their tents; others crowd in; a board shanty is put up and some enterprising individual starts a store with a hundred dollars' worth of picks, shovels, flannel shirts, and boots; soon an express is started to the nearest town, and they are in full blast."

While the imposing name of city was given to these mining camps, they were far from being cities as we now understand the term. The houses were mostly of canvas, supported by a few poles. Fire was an ever present menace, and the history of these communities contains an account of one or more disastrous conflagrations in all of them.

The manner in which the gold miners spread over the county is indicated by the settlements made by them.

At Hamilton Bend on the Feather River below Oroville, was located Hamilton, the first county seat of the county. In the spring of 1850 several parties are reported to have been living there. Among them was a nephew of Alexander Hamilton, who gave his name to the place, and who located the town with A. N. Morgan. On the same bank of the river between Hamilton and Oroville, was Columbus. This was originally the site of an Indian rancharia. Its population was largely Chinese. During the brief period when steamboats operated to Oroville in the Fifties, Columbus was a stopping place for those vessels.

The City of Bagdad was located two miles below Oroville.

At the present site of Oroville was Ophir. This was one of the first settlements in the county, it being located as early as October, 1849. In 1852 a discovery at White Rock, four miles above Ophir, practically depopulated the place.

Long's Bar, about two miles above Oroville, was named after the Long Brothers, who had a store there. This became one of the most important of the early mining camps of the State. Across the river from Long's Bar was Adamstown. Lynchburg was a prosperous community of the early Fifties, which occupied the ground upon which Oro Vista, a suburb of Oroville, is now located. Between Lynchburg and Oroville was another "city," called Middletown. Thompson's Flat was first settled in 1848, when it was called Rich Gulch. In 1854 the population became so large that the site of the town was changed so as not to interfere with the diggings. George Thompson, who had a hotel there, gave his name to the place.

On the Middle Fork of the Feather River at its junction with the South Fork was Bidwell Bar. On the South Fork of the Feather River was Stringtown, which derived its name from the manner in which its buildings were "strung out." Enterprise was located a mile above Stringtown, and was named after the Union Enterprise Mining Company, which operated there. Above Enterprise lay Forbestown. Between 1850 and 1860, it is estimated that there were 3000 people living in Forbestown and its vicinity. Clipper Mills was established in the same period, and was located as a lumbering camp to supply timber to the mines.

On the North Fork of the Feather River was Potter's Bar. In the territory draining into the North Fork were many mining camps, the best known among which were Spanishtown and Frenchtown. Yankee Hill fell heir to what Spanishtown and Frenchtown had to bequeath when they passed on and out.

Morris Ravine received its name from an employee of Samuel Neal, who in 1848 guided a party of Oregonians from the Neal Ranch to the Feather River diggings.

A band of Cherokee Indians, who came here in company with a Yankee school teacher who was teaching in the Indian Territory, gave the name to Cherokee. Wyandotte was located by Wyandotte Indians who in 1850 found gold there.

Evansville, Dicksburg on Honcut Creek, old Honcut City near Bangor, all sprang into being at about the same time.

Bangor was settled in 1855. In that year L. C. Hyland and the Lumbert Brothers opened stores about a mile apart. Hyland was evidently a booster, for he laid out on paper a town of about two hundred blocks about his store. There were squares reserved for public use, but Hyland was the only man who ever built there. The Lumbert Brothers came from Bangor, Maine, and they gave to the settlement the name of their home city.

This period also marks the settlement of the Magalia Ridge. Powellton in Kimshew Township was located in 1853 by R. P. Powell. In 1855 George Lovelock located the place that still bears his name. Inskip was located by a man named Kelly. The mines of Inskip were exceptionally rich and hundreds of miners congregated there. Dogtown, later called Magalia, also was located in this period, as were Helltown, Diamondville, and Centerville.

## RECOVERY OF GOLD

The amount of gold that has been recovered from the mines of Butte County is a matter of conjecture. Unfortunately records of gold productions were not kept in the early days. But that the gold yield reached enormous proportions is certain. A. Ekman, who in his lifetime was considered an authority upon Butte County's mining industry, in a report to the California Miners' Association in 1899, estimated the gold production of Butte



County up to that time not less than \$200,000,000. Records of the State Mining Bureau show a production of \$44,000,000 between the years 1880 and 1917. Charles G. Yale, statistician for the United States Geological Survey, states that in the year 1852 the mines of California produced the enormous total of \$81,294,700, and that it was not until 1857 that the annual yield fell below \$50,000,000.

The pre-eminent richness of the Butte County diggings upon the Feather River was early recognized. The gold of the Feather River diggings was also the freest from alloys of any produced in the State.

One of the world's largest nuggets was found in Butte County, about two miles east of Magalia. In August, 1859, the miners on this claim washed out a chunk of gold weighing fifty-four pounds in the rough. This is the world famous "Dogtown Nugget." This nugget was about two inches thick, shaped something like the map of Africa, and slightly larger than a gold pan.

## HOW THE GOLD WAS MINED

While the men who came here first knew but little of mineralogy or geology, and nothing of mining, the rapid development of scientific mining methods is of interest inasmuch as it reveals the ingenuity of the American mind. The pick and pan and shovel came first. Then came the rocker; then the "long tom." The "long tom" was an inclined, stationary wooden trough or box from ten to thirty feet in length, the bottom of which was made of perforated sheets of iron. Beneath this was placed a riffle box with crossbars to catch the gold. Out of the "long tom" the sluice developed.

The river bed was mined by changing its course by wing dams, and by literally lifting the river from its bed into flumes, and mining the gravel that was thus exposed. The largest flumes in the State were those upon the Feather River above Oroville. For the "dry diggings" hydraulic mining was soon advised. To supply water for these, great ditches were built. It was for this purpose that the so-called Palermo and Forbestown ditch systems were first built. During the Fifties also quartz mining was started. The first quartz mining was at Forbestown.

After 1857 there came a change in mining operations. The rich placer diggings had become exhausted. California was no longer the poor miner's paradise. Gold could no longer be obtained so easily without the outlay of capital. Deeper diggings required larger investments.

The change in mining conditions was generally recognized. As early as December, 1856, the Butte Record, commenting upon the changed conditions, said: "The glorious mining days of 1849, when men could travel over mountains and through the gulches and ravines and with a prospecting pan and crevicing knife realize

the highest wages ever known to a mining section, are undoubtedly passed. The effort now is to reach the bedrock, and this in many cases requires the expenditure of much labor and capital; and although the pay realized is not so extravagantly large as in former days, still there are few claims that have been worked systematically that have not proved profitable to those who have invested in them."

## THE EARLY PIONEERS

The early mining communities of Butte County were rich in the material that has made the history of California during "the days of gold" of interest the world over. Men coming from older, more settled and more prosaic communities, found themselves in an environment as different from that they had left as night from day. Precedents counted for but little. Station amounted to nothing. Nor did superior education count for as much as it did in the older States, for the road to wealth was the same to all. Hittell, in his history of California, says this of the pioneers:

"The pioneers were the most active, the most industrious and enterprising body of men in proportion to their numbers that was ever thrown together to form a new community. Four-fifths of them were young men between eighteen and thirty-five years of age. They came from all sections of the country and many of them from foreign countries. They all came to labor, or found when they got to the mines that to keep on an equality with their neighbors they had to labor. \* \* \* Every man finding every other man compelled to labor, found himself the equal of every other man; and as the labor required was physical rather than mental, the usual superiority of headworkers over handworkers disappeared entirely. Men who had been Governors and Legislators and Judges in the old States, worked by the side of outlaws and convicts; scholars and students by the side of men who could not read or write; those who had been masters by the side of those who had been slaves. Old social distinctions were obliterated. Everybody did business on his own account, and not one man in fifty was the employee, and much less the servant, of another."

Admittedly the founders of this commonwealth were not without faults. But as a rule the faults were those that went with their peculiar environment. There were exceptions, of course. In such a conglomerate array, it would indeed have been strange if some desperate characters were not found. But no one can study the history of the pioneers and learn of the dangers that they dared, the sacrifices that they made, the deeds that they accomplished, without paying tribute to their sturdy character.

A few facts relative to society during the Fifties will be of interest. In the first place it might be noted that the population of Butte County during the first few years of the white settlement was made up almost entirely of men. In 1850 women composed but three per cent of the population. Children were so few that in November, 1851, when Butte County embraced all of the territory now included in Butte and Plumas Counties and a portion

of Lassen, Tehama, Colusa and Sutter Counties, Warren T. Sexton, then County Clerk, wrote to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction as follows:

"In answer to your communication, I can only say that there is not one school in the county. It being almost entirely a mining county, the number of children between the ages of four and eighteen years is comparatively small. From the means I have of judging, I would say that there were not more than fifty."

## THEFT INFREQUENT IN 1849

While drinking and gambling were very prevalent, all accounts agree that theft was very infrequent in the year 1849. Old residents state that gold in pans and rockers was left at the claims while the miners were at their meals and the gold remained untouched in the canvas tents during the days while the miners were at work at their claims. Judge C. F. Lott stated that at one time he rode along a trail in company with others and they saw a pan containing at least \$1000 in gold dust and nuggets on a rock near the trail. Nearly a week later he passed by a second time and the pan with its contents of gold was still there, although it is probable that fifty men had passed that way during the week.

With the arrival of the Australian emigration in 1850, this condition changed. The "Sydney Ducks," as they were called by the miners, were a lawless set. Moreover the lawless element from other places began to arrive, and as a result crime increased. During the second half of the decade the activity of the Vigilantes in San Francisco resulted in driving many of the desperate and criminal element out of that city and as a result crime in the interior again increased in extent. While there was much crime, it must not be forgotten that criminals were the exception, not the rule.

## THE MAIL SYSTEM

Turning from the more vicious aspects of early society to other phases of life in Butte County, we find a more pleasing prospect. The picture painted by the Butte Record of the arrival of mail at Bidwell Bar is filled with human interest. The delight of those who received letters from home and the disappointment of those who failed to get such letters, are duly set forth. The eagerness with which news of the outside world was awaited is shown in the amount of space devoted in the Butte Record to clippings of news from the Atlantic States.

Mailing facilities were not the best and chief reliance was placed upon the express companies to deliver the mail. An illuminating light upon mail conditions in the early Fifties is contained in a bit of verse written upon an envelope which came to Potter's Bar upon the North Fork of the Feather River, in

September, 1854. The verse was reprinted in the Butte Record of that time. On the envelope was scrawled:

“This is the 27th letter I’ve sent by the mail  
 In time to go to port before the ship would sail,  
 And sent to my son in California;  
 But more than three-fourths of them are lost by the way.  
 And if the Mail Department don’t take it into hand  
 To send the letters more correct by water and by land,  
 For to write so many letters it does not pay the cost  
 If more than three-fourths of them are always to be lost.  
 Now I pray take pity on a disconsolate Mother,  
 And try to carry this one safe, if you never do another.”

In November, 1853, the Butte Record entered a complaint on behalf of the people of Oregon Gulch. Though not more than forty miles from Marysville, it was reported that it often took a letter a month to reach there from the Marysville postoffice, and that it cost from \$1 to \$2 to get each letter.

The inadequacy of the mail service was partly compensated for by a thorough and efficient express service. Adams and Company, and Wells, Fargo and Company both served the mining districts through local companies affiliated with them. Connections with these larger companies were made at Marysville. The remuneration received by the expressman was \$1 for each letter received. The express agent would go into the Postoffice at Marysville with his list of patrons. He would maul over the mail there, separate that of his clients, and pay the postmaster there twenty-five cents for each letter. Newspapers were delivered for fifty cents. Letters were taken back to Marysville to be mailed there at half price.

These express agents served the most distant communities in the mountains, and a monument should be erected to their memory. A keen sense of duty impelled them to brave perils before which the most courageous might well quail. They did their duty as a matter of course. In winter, as well as in summer, they covered their route. And if a mountain settlement was not reached it was because the task was impossible.

Among these express agents was Fenton B. Whiting. In the year 1858 Mr. Whiting instituted a dog express service over the mountains into Plumas County. He had secured three dogs of the St. Bernard and Newfoundland breeds, and these he broke to harness. The first trip was a magnificent success. The dog express continued in service until in 1865 snowshoes were placed on horses and the dog express gave way to the winter stage.

## MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

Supplies were carried into the mountains by immense lines of pack trains. Mules were employed for packing and not only was freight handled in this manner, but there were passenger



trains of mules as well. The hurricane deck of a mule was a customary means of traveling in the Fifties.

In the valley sections the buggy and stage coach became the established means of communication on land. As there were no bridges, the rivers were crossed by means of ferries.

Steamboat transportation began early on the Sacramento River, and in 1850 there is a record of a steamer that went as far north as Chico Landing. Steamboat service on the Sacramento River to Red Bluff was maintained regularly and on the Feather River as far as Marysville. During the middle of the decade steamboat service was started to Oroville, but the opposition of Marysville merchants, who desired to maintain Marysville's place as the head of navigation, resulted in a cessation of this service.

## THE '49 PRICES

The prices during 1849 are a matter of interest, and the expression "'49 prices" has come to mean the highest price to which the cost of living can soar. While in 1849 prices were very high, in the middle of the Fifties the cost of living was reasonable. Joseph Brown, who reached the Feather River Diggings in 1849, reports that upon his arrival he paid a dollar a pound for flour. A jar of pickles and two sweet potatoes cost \$11; a paper of needles and two spools of thread, \$7.50; shoes cost from \$10 to \$14 a pair, and rubber boots were quoted from \$28 to \$35 a pair. Oliver Goldsmith, who arrived at the Feather diggings with Judge Lott and Judge Sexton, states that upon his arrival it was difficult to get provisions and that the amount that one person could purchase was limited. He states that provisions were sold at the uniform rate of \$2 a pound. Most of the provisions were hauled by ox team from Sacramento, and pioneers state that the cost of getting the goods here fully justified the prices asked.

With the development of the country and the establishment of stage and steamer routes, the cost of living dropped. Apparently there was little objection among miners to the prices asked, the only record of an indignation meeting being one held at Bidwell Bar "to take into consideration," as the Butte Record expressed it, "the action of a Bidwell merchant who had been selling Dr. Stroeve's California Salve for butter."

During the early period before the discovery of gold, trading was chiefly accomplished by barter. In 1849 and in the early Fifties the principal medium of exchange was gold dust. There were also in circulation what were known as "California coins," or privately minted slugs of gold. These were in ten-, twenty- and fifty-dollar denominations. They were of octagonal shape, and were made in San Francisco. After 1853 many Spanish and English coins found their way into the currency of the section, as did Mexican coins. Gold dust was still extensively used. In the latter



half of the decade the United States coinage became more plentiful. In Oroville and in the larger centers banks purchased the gold dust from the miners, paying them for it in coin. Some miners, however, not desiring to bank their gold dust, would conceal it. The papers tell of one miner who hid a large number of nuggets in a hole in a tree, only to return later to find that tree squirrels had made way with his treasure. Many years later in chopping up a pine tree for wood at Bangor, a can was found in a cavity in the tree that had grown over. This can was filled with nuggets and gold dust, and had evidently been concealed there by some early miner. There was immediately much activity reported in prospecting the pine trees in the Bangor section, but without further success.

## EARLY AMUSEMENTS

The people of the early period were of course mainly dependent upon their own efforts for amusements. Horse racing was a favorite sport. Hunting was good. There were many bull and bear fights. Amateur theatrical companies were organized. Dancing was a favorite amusement. As there were not enough ladies to go round, men would take the part of the women and would designate themselves by tying a handkerchief about one of their arms. An account of one of the early balls, as printed in the *Butte Record* of December, 1853, is worthy of preservation. Says that paper:

"The ball given at Comb's Exchange at Wyandotte last Friday night was a capital affair. Quite a number of the dear little critters that set a man's head crazy were on hand and never did the same number shine forth to better advantage. The supper was ample and in fact perfectly delicious. \* \* \* As the dance was about to come to a close, the ladies having retired, the grand finale was the Highland fling stag dance, free for all ages, sizes and costumes. This gave the fiddler a chance he little expected. He could not stand the punishment; for in the midst of a grand pas de lux he came down from his lofty position, fiddle in hand, and mixed promiscuously. He made a pair of eight-pound miner's boots cut more capers and hifalutin gymnastics than ever Miss Caroline Roussette did with a pair of golden slippers. And so it passed off to the satisfaction of everyone. It would not do to speak of any particular beauty who was present on that occasion, for the others would pout about it. So we will dry up by saying that they were a charming set of little witches, every one of them."

## THE CHANGE TO A FARMING COUNTY

The year 1860 may be considered as marking the transition of Butte County from a mining to an agricultural county. While of course mining still continued as an important industry, yet, after 1860, the emphasis had changed and agriculture had assumed and was assuming a more important place in the industrial life of the county.

In the development of agriculture in Butte County, there is one figure whose life is worthy of the most careful study. The breadth of vision of General John Bidwell, his enterprise, and his courage, have left a legacy not only of rich memories, but in the great material development to Butte County. Every boy and girl in Butte County should become intimately acquainted with the life of General Bidwell, one of the Nation's most noted pioneers, an account of whose life will appear later in this book.

## THE EARLY GOVERNMENT

One of the characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon people is that wherever they go they carry with them the institutions of free and orderly government, and the school, press and church. This is clearly seen in Butte County.

Prior to the acquisition of California by the United States the machinery of government was of course that of Mexico. After the miners came there was need of more immediate methods of settling disputes and administering justice than that of the alcalde courts. The nearest alcalde to the Feather River district was in Sacramento. And so miners' courts arose, where justice was dealt out both with swiftness and with a large measure of fairness. After California was admitted to statehood the work of organizing the machinery of government proceeded rapidly.

Butte County was one of the group of the first counties organized in the State. The Act of 1850 passed by the first Legislature provided for the division of the State into political units. This was not an easy task. The geography of the State was but little known. The population was a shifting one. Populous communities of one week were depopulated the next. The Legislature could only do its best in mapping out the minor divisions of the State. The surprising thing is not that some errors were made, but that they were not more numerous.

Butte County as it was organized under the Act of 1850 comprised the present county of Plumas, a great part of Lassen County as it now exists, and parts of Tehama, Colusa and Sutter Counties.

It was nearly a parallelogram in form. Its dimensions were 80 miles from north to south and 160 miles from east to west. It contained about 12,800 square miles and about 8,330,000 acres. Its area then was as large as the combined area of Vermont and Delaware.

The members of the State Legislature, with their imperfect knowledge of exact boundaries, were of the opinion that this area comprised the Butte mountains, and hence the county was given the name of Butte. But this was an error. When the boundary line between Butte and Sutter Counties was surveyed, it was found that the Buttes were in the latter county. Later, for a short time, a change in the boundary line placed these mountains

in Butte County, but the line was again changed in a very short time and Butte County lost the mountains to Sutter County. In 1854 Plumas County was created out of Butte County. In 1856 a portion of the county was added to Tehama County.

The first court in the county was organized under the trees of Little Chico Creek. The voters, however, had selected Hamilton City on the banks of the Feather River as the county seat, and the court was moved there. Later the county seat was changed to Bidwell Bar, and later still to Oroville.

## LYNCH LAW

The records of administration of justice during the first decade of county life are replete with interest. Reference has already been made to the early miners' courts. These still survived after the organization of the county government. The newspapers are replete with accounts of proceedings at which Judge Lynch presided. Lynch law during the early days, however, is not to be considered the same as lynch law as the term is now used. Proceedings were conducted in an orderly manner. The accused was given a chance to be heard. Counsel was appointed to defend him and a jury empanelled. A verdict once rendered, however, it was carried into execution without delay.

During the latter half of the decade which comprises the Fifties, however, conditions became more settled and lynch law became more of an evidence of mob violence. Crime during the latter half of the decade greatly increased. Highwaymen infested the roads. Bands of armed Mexicans roved about, robbing, assaulting and murdering their victims. Under these conditions, the orderly administration of justice sometimes gave way to lynch law as we now understand the term.

It is not surprising that in the early days, when the attention of the pioneers was largely devoted to mining, but little attention was paid to agriculture. In fact, until the second half of the decade between 1850 and 1860, reference to agriculture is so scanty as to be almost nil. Mr. Fowler, an early Assemblyman from Butte County, in an interview given to the Sacramento Union stated that "Butte County contains but a limited amount of good agricultural land, lying in the lower part of the county, chiefly about Hamilton." After 1855, however, agriculture began to receive more attention. Mining was then requiring larger capital and gold was less abundant. Under these circumstances it is but natural that men who came originally from agricultural communities should again turn their attention to farming.

## FIRST FARMING DEVELOPMENT

The two centers where agriculture appears to have first developed were at Hamilton and at John Bidwell's place at Chico. As

early as 1854 a resident of Hamilton, writing to the Butte Record, reported that there had been 2000 acres planted to wheat and barley there, besides vegetables of all kinds. A continuous fence for a distance of three miles also was reported. Also it was reported that the people had found that they could live "without being stuck upon the bank of the river." and that the most desirable places were "some distance back, some as far as three miles."

During this decade the Mother Orange Tree at Bidwell Bar, which gave the orange industry to Butte County, was planted. During this period also the foundations of the foothill irrigation systems were laid in great ditches then constructed for mining purposes, but later used for irrigation.

One of the vexing questions of the early period and one closely associated with agriculture was that of land titles or land ownership. Complicating this problem was the large number of persons who claimed Mexican grants. Some of these grants were held under valid title and others were spurious. The right to these lands was disputed by men who settled upon them, and who were called squatters. The squatter disputes reached an acute stage in the second half of the decade, although there was not the violence in Butte County that marked the squatter troubles in some of the other counties of the State.

## INDIAN TROUBLES

From the year 1849 up to and including the year 1866, the history of Butte County is replete with accounts of troubles between the Indians and the whites. Just where the fault lay cannot be fully determined. Probably both races were at fault. The Indians were sometimes inclined to be thievish. Some whites regarded Indians as little better than animals, to be shot down as one would a coyote. The result was murder of whites by the Indians and massacres of Indians by the whites. In addition to the trouble between the whites and the Indians there were occasional forays, particularly during the early period, made by mountain Indians upon the more peaceable Indians of the valleys. The whites generally aligned themselves with the valley Indians, thus increasing the friction between mountain tribes and the white settlers.

In early days the bow and arrow was the principal, if not the only, weapon of the Indians. To poison the arrow points, the liver of a deer was secured and placed where it would be bitten by rattlesnakes. A wound from an arrow that had been thus poisoned generally caused instant death; if not, blood poisoning was sure to follow.

In the manufacture of arrow and spear points, jasper and flint were principally used. One source of supply from which the



warrior tribes obtained their flint was from a cave in Table Mountain near Oroville. This is discussed in a bulletin issued by the American Museum of Natural History. We quote in part: "Near Oroville, one of the best known spots for getting flint was in a cave in or near Table Mountain. The opening to the cave was very small, but once in, the size was such that a man could stand upright. A person going to get the flint must crawl in, and then throw ahead of him beads or dried meat as offerings to the spirits for the flint he was about to take. One was allowed to take only as much flint as he could break off at a single blow. The flint obtained, the person had to crawl out backwards. If the regulations were not complied with, the person would have bad luck, the flint would not chip well, or would fail to kill."

The policy of dealing with the Indian problem by the wholesale removal of Indians to reservations began in the decade between 1850 and 1860. The first reservation was west of Tehama, and a number of Indians were removed there as early as 1854. In the next decade sweeping orders for the removal of Indians were issued and many of them were sent to the Round Valley Reservation.

It must not be thought that the white settlers were altogether without fault. So outrageous was the treatment of Indians by some white men that the white settlers of Oregon Gulch called a meeting and demanded that the county authorities protect the Indians, declaring that if the authorities did not give such protection, the men at the meeting would take the law into their own hands.

In 1850, it is related in Bancroft's History of California that some miners on the Middle Fork of the Feather River missed their cattle. They suspected the Indians of stealing them and forthwith marched to an Indian village nearby. They surrounded the village and poured a fusillade of shots into it. A number of Indians were killed. On the return of the miners they ran across the cattle, which had strayed into a canyon near by.

Attacks upon Indians which led to protests by white settlers are frequently recorded in the newspapers of the period.

In the early Sixties the strained relationship between the two races had reached the point of frequent attempts at massacres. Complicating the problem was the fact that there lived in Deer Creek Canyon in Tehama County a band of bad Indians. These Indians began a series of attacks upon the white settlements of Butte and Tehama Counties. These in turn led to reprisals upon all Indians, to the deportation of most of the Indians of the county to reservations, and to the practical annihilation of the Deer Creek Indians.

A pleasing picture by way of contrast is painted by Colonel Royce in his recollections of General Bidwell. He writes:



"At variance with the usual frontier white man's method of seeking the expulsion or the extermination of the Indian, General Bidwell substituted kind treatment, lucrative employment, and comfortable subsistence. From that day to this the Indians of Rancho Chico have been a factor in its industrial development. They have been taught to plow, to sow, to reap and to mow. General Bidwell set apart for them and removed them to a tract of land about half a mile northwest of his house. He aided and encouraged them to substitute frame houses for their native earthen huts, and afforded them protection from the intrusion and outrage of lawless whites. He was their sole judge, counsellor and protector. His word was law. All disputes and difficulties arising from their daily routine of life were settled by him. After listening to both sides of the story, he would administer the necessary justice, inquire about their wives and families, and send them on their way."

## THE SLAVERY QUESTION

During the Fifties the slavery question had been largely overlooked in California, despite the fact that in the Eastern States this issue was attracting more and more attention and the situation was growing increasingly tense. The situation as far as the slavery issue is concerned, is well stated by D. P. Crowder, of Chico, in his reminiscences of early days in Butte County. He writes:

"The people hereabouts all came from the States, some from those which were in sympathy with the Northern cause, and some from those which were on the opposite side of the fence. You will remember that in the Fifties the slavery issue was pretty general all over the country; but it seemed that we pioneers got away out here by ourselves and we had too much to do and our community interests were so large, that we sort of let the slavery question slide and did not take sides one way or another to any great extent, although we all had decided views on the subject one way or the other, only we kept them to ourselves. Trouble did not start here until the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860. Then strife and dissension immediately sprang up. Prejudice and intolerance immediately reared their heads; and the first thing we knew we were, figuratively at least, pretty much at each other's throats."

It will come as a surprise to many people in Butte County to know that slavery existed in this county. Yet the first document in the records of the county is a deed of manumission by Franklin Stewart of a slave named Washington. Another instrument of the same nature appears in the records of 1857.

## THE CIVIL WAR

The beginning of the Civil War stirred the people of Butte County to a depth and patriotic fervor never before realized.

But while the sentiment of the people was overwhelmingly loyal, yet there were in various communities Southern sympathizers and advocates of secession, against whom the press fulminated with thunderous denunciation. During the first half of the Sixties the great Civil War dominated and overshadowed

the life of the people of Butte County, as elsewhere in the county. To again quote the reminiscences of Mr. Crowder:

"Late news from the East as to war developments was always followed by brawls and fights. Epithets such as 'copperhead' and 'black abolitionist' were thrown about. Many times firearms were brought into play. Two men that I know of were killed. There would have been many more killings had not cooler heads often intervened. Excitement ran at a high pitch, and there were threats and counter threats."

When the first call for volunteers came, by pony express, enlistments in Butte County started. Butte County also loyally responded to the second and third calls for the men to fight for the preservation of the Union. The greater number of the enlistments here served with troops in Arizona and in Nevada.

At home an adequate system of defense was not overlooked. During a certain period troops were stationed at Fort Bidwell in Chico. As to the reason for the troops being sent there, a wide difference of opinion exists. Some contend that it was because of anti-Union sentiment, while others declare that their presence was due to Indian troubles. At all events their stay in Butte County was uneventful.

At Oroville, Chico and Bangor companies of home guards were organized. These companies were prompt to stamp out disloyalty. Secessionists and near-secessionists found themselves in trouble. The usual punishment was "packing sand." A bag would be filled with sand and the prisoner would be assigned to a beat, back and forth, along which he had to carry the sand. In the more serious cases prisoners were sent to the federal prison on Alcatraz Island.

The receipt of the news of Union victories resulted in immediate celebrations in Chico and Oroville.

During the war the people of Butte County contributed liberally to the National Sanitary Fund. And in view of the fact that the famous Gridley sack of flour that raised enormous sums for the sanitary fund was ground in the Bidwell mill at Chico, the people of this county claimed a sort of reflected glory from the results that it accomplished.

One of the results of the war was the establishment of quite an extensive pitch and turpentine industry in the mountains of Butte County. This industry disappeared, however, shortly after the war ended.

## THE WHEAT INDUSTRY

The decade from 1860 to 1870 marked the transition of Butte County from a county whose chief industry was mining to one whose chief industry was agriculture. The most significant feature of the agricultural development of this decade was the rise of the great wheat industry. During the earlier years of the decade the acreage planted to wheat was mostly confined to a

small area about Hamilton and Durham. But along in the middle years of the Sixties a group of men accustomed to farming the adobe lands of the San Joaquin Valley came to Butte County and settled upon the adobe lands here. Wheat was planted and despite the skepticism of the "old timers" who considered adobe land of no value except for range purposes, phenomenal crops of wheat were harvested. The acreage increased and Butte County rapidly became one of the great wheat producing counties of the West. In another portion of this book has been told the story of the potent influence of General Bidwell in developing agriculture and horticulture.

## THE RISE OF CHICO

To this decade also belongs the birth of Chico as a city. The development of Chico came as a logical consequence of the growing importance of the agricultural development of the county.

General Bidwell laid off the town of Chico in 1860, the survey being made by J. S. Henning, then County Surveyor. Main Street was the first street located. Of course it was already a road, but such a poor one that the mud was knee deep in the winter months, being constantly churned up by the stages and the heavy freights. General Bidwell's offer to give a lot to anyone who would build on the Chico townsite immediately started a little building boom, and soon houses were springing up on every side.

In 1864 Chico had a population of 500 people. Soon an equal population with Oroville was claimed, and the rivalry between the two communities was very keen. During this period Chico had stage communications with Oroville and Marysville and steamboat navigation along the Sacramento River.

## THE FIRST RAILROAD

The Sixties saw the first railroad built in Butte County. The county by a popular vote bonded itself for \$200,000, and these bonds were exchanged for those of the California Northern Railroad, which built a railroad from Marysville to Oroville. This was the fourth railroad to be built in California.

As the county became more settled more attention was given to the public highways. It was in this period that the Humboldt Road was constructed. A big mining excitement had broken out in the Humboldt River section of Nevada, and the road was built to connect Chico with that section. Later a mail contract was secured to serve certain mining districts in Idaho via Chico and the Humboldt Road. The Grizzly Bear, a magazine published by the Native Sons, tells of the first "mule train" over this road as follows: "The first saddle train from Chico to Idaho via Susanville left Chico on April 3, 1865, in command of Captain Pierce,

an old pioneer of the mountains of the Pacific Coast. Passengers riding upon the hurricane deck of a mule paid a fare of \$66. This included the use of a roll of blankets to sleep under, and the carrying of a supply of provisions. There were forty passengers on the first train."

This project was backed by General Bidwell. For awhile the Idaho mines were supplied with mail over this route. The construction of the Central Pacific Railroad gave Idaho access to a nearer railroad point, and the contract was not renewed. The result was the discontinuance of the service.

A rival to the Humboldt Road to Susanville was the road from Oroville via Dogtown and Humbug. This road had a heavy traffic. In 1856 the present Oroville-Forbestown-Woodleaf road was completed in order that the traffic from the La Porte mines might be diverted from Marysville to Oroville.

In 1862 one of the most disastrous floods in the history of the county occurred upon the Feather River. Oroville was completely shut off from all supplies, and George C. Perkins, who was then a prominent merchant of Oroville, sent a steamer down to Marysville, where it was loaded with supplies and sailed back to Oroville. This is the last steamship trip made on the Feather River to Oroville.

Mr. Perkins had been born in Maine, and had sailed as a sailor around Cape Horn for California. Arriving here, he carried his blankets and walked from Sacramento to Oroville, and began working as a miner in a river claim. He was not very successful as a miner, and engaged in the merchandising business in Oroville, at which he made a great success. He was elected to the State Legislature from Butte County, and later became Governor of the State. Later he was elected United States Senator from California, and served in that body for many years.

In 1862 the people of Dogtown rebelled against the name and the Postoffice Department was persuaded to change the name of the office there to Magalia, which, it was explained, meant "cottages."

## PERIOD FROM 1870 TO 1880

The decade from 1870 to 1880 was one filled with varied interests. Periods of great activity alternated with periods of great depression.

Possibly the greatest event of the period as far as permanent results were concerned, was the completion of the California and Oregon Railroad (now the Central Pacific) through the county. This resulted in a new era of town building.

In July, 1870, the completion of this road to Chico was announced. On July 4th of that year Chico celebrated in gala style, the celebration being a double one in honor both of the Nation's natal



day and the fact that Chico had secured direct railroad transportation. There was a big parade, and laudatory and congratulatory speeches were delivered. Three thousand people partook of the barbecue that was served.

Following the inauguration of service upon the new railroad, new towns and settlements arose along its route. Chief among these was Biggs, which for a number of years was the third place in point of population in Butte County. The previous decade had demonstrated that large crops of wheat could be grown on the adobe lands of that section. A shipping point for the grain was needed. The most convenient point was the station to which the name of Biggs was given in honor of Hon. Marion Biggs, Sr. Major Biggs, as he was then known, shipped the first grain from the station, and did a great deal to build up the town.

Gridley also owes its origin to this period. The town was named after George W. Gridley, upon whose land the station and the town were located. Gridley was one of the picturesque characters of the early period. He had been an auctioneer in the Fifties in the horse markets of Marysville and Sacramento and had amassed considerable wealth. He came to Butte County and purchased a large portion of the Neal Ranch.

In 1870 Nord (north) was laid out by C. W. Colby. In the following year the townsite of Cana was surveyed.

Durham, named after W. W. Durham, also belongs to this period. This station was opened in 1870.

Nelson was surveyed as a town by the California and Oregon Railroad in 1873. The townsite was on railroad land. The place was named after Captain A. D. Nelson.

## A MINING BOOM

The development of agriculture had been one of the most notable features of the Sixties. In the Seventies the industrial pendulum swung back to mining. Cherokee, and the Lava Beds of Oroville, particularly were the scene of a tremendous mining activity during this decade.

The Spring Valley Mine, which was destined to become one of the most famous hydraulic mines in the world, was located upon the north end of Table Mountain. During its early history the mining area was worked by individual locators who held, according to the mining laws of the district, one hundred feet square for each locator. The gold was recovered by means of rockers, long toms and sluices, as these methods succeeded each other. After 1858 the work was exclusively done by the hydraulic method.

Up to the year 1870 the supply of water to carry on hydraulic mining was obtained from the drainage of about ten square miles of territory. At that time a number of capitalists associated themselves in building reservoirs, constructing ditches, and laying iron



pipe above the canyon of the West Branch. The pipe was thirty inches in diameter and 13,100 feet in length. Most engineers considered the feat impossible and advised capitalists not to invest. But the pipe was successfully laid and the mining activity increased, demanding more reservoirs, more ditches, and more pipe.

In some parts of this mine the banks had a perpendicular height of 450 feet. From 1870 to 1886 over \$5,000,000 in gold was obtained from this mine. It is estimated that a like amount was obtained from the operations there prior to 1870.

As the operations at the mine increased, trouble developed over the huge volume of slickens or debris that was washed down upon the valley lands. Farmers in the valley found that their lands were being covered with this mining debris. Other mines were filling rivers and streams with slickens. And so many meetings were held to protest against hydraulic mining and many suits started against the miners. The Spring Valley Mining Company bought many of the ranches that were being covered with tailings and averted trouble in this manner. Finally it was decided to construct what became known as and is yet known as the Cherokee Canal, to carry the tailings into Butte Creek and thence to the tules of Sutter County.

## LAVA BEDS EXCITEMENT

In 1873 the operations of the Chinese miners upon the so-called Lava Beds at Oroville began to attract widespread attention. This name was apparently given the district by reason of the fact that the first mining claims located there were known as the Modoc claims. The lava beds of Modoc County resulted in the nickname "the lava beds of Oroville." For some time the Chinese population of Oroville had been increasing, and the mining operations at the Lava Beds were each year assuming larger importance. As early as 1872 the Chinese settlement in Oroville was declared to be the largest Chinese mining camp in California. In 1874 the Lava Beds excitement was at its height. Special trains brought the Chinese into Oroville. They would be met by police officials, marched to the Courthouse square, their poll tax collected, and then they would be released to go whither they pleased or where their contracts called. It is stated that in that year there were fully ten thousand Chinese in Oroville. Before the end of the decade the district had been pretty well worked out, and in 1878 the Chinese population had decreased to about two thousand.

## CHINESE TROUBLES

In 1877 serious Chinese troubles started in the county which finally culminated in the murder of six Chinamen in a cabin on

Chico Creek about two and one-half miles from Chico. There existed in Chico at that time a branch of the Order of Caucasians. This was a state-wide order, which proposed to force the Chinese out of California. The order attempted to force the employers to desist from employing Chinese, and notices were sent to many people in Chico to discharge their Chinese house servants. To oppose the Order of Caucasians, the citizens of Chico organized what was known as the Committee of One Hundred. The murderers of the Chinese were arrested and convicted. They were found to be members of the Order of Caucasians.

## LUMBERING INDUSTRY

During 1870 the lumbering industry of Butte County developed into large proportions. During the last five years of this decade mammoth V-flumes extending for miles from the forests into the valley, where mills were located, were built.

The largest of these flumes was that of the Sierra Lumber Company, which operated large mills in Chico. The flume was completed in 1876, and extended from Butte Meadows to Chico, a distance of forty miles.

In December of the same year a flume was completed from a point near Dogtown to a point near Pence, which became known as Dumpville.

The town of Honcut owes its growth to the development of the lumbering industry during this decade. Previously the place had been called Moore's Station. In 1879 a great flume was completed from Woodleaf to Honcut, the nearest railroad point, where large mills had been built and where a prosperous community arose.

The growth of agriculture and the construction of the California and Oregon Railroad, now the Central Pacific, as far as Chico, resulted in 1870 in an attempt to incorporate Chico. This first attempt was defeated, but in 1872 the attempt was renewed and on that occasion it was successful.

A brief review of the census figures will be of interest. In 1860 the population of the county was 12,106. In 1870 it had decreased to 11,403. In 1880 it had increased to 18,721.

The importance of highways was clearly realized by the business men of the period, and there was much attention given to the improvement of existing roads and the location of new roads that would attract business. During the latter half of the decade Oroville did a tremendous freight business with the mountain territory. Its streets were lined with big freighting outfits. Goods were purchased from the merchants of Oroville for points as far north as southeastern Oregon. One reason assigned for the concentration of mountain trade in Oroville was the liberal subscription of the merchants of Oroville to maintain mountain roads leading into the city.

The merchants of Chico also were active in the matter of road improvement and did a large freighting and mercantile business with the mountain settlements.

## BUTTE IN THE EIGHTIES

The period from 1880 to 1890 was one of transition, rather than of progress. The census of 1880 gave the population of the county as 18,721. That of 1890 revealed its population to be 17,939. This decrease in population is probably to be accounted for by the fact that during the early years of the decade hydraulic mining was largely stopped and intensive agriculture was only well started. Neither mining nor agriculture was as profitable as it had been.

Except for the ominous clouds that had been gathering against hydraulicking as the Seventies came to their close, the decade started in a most auspicious manner for the mining industry. In 1879 there arrived in Oroville a man of spectacular instincts and splendid ability, Major Frank McLaughlin. For twenty years he played a large part in the history of Butte County, and in fact in the history of the State. Major McLaughlin was first sent to Butte County by Thomas A. Edison. His mission was to hunt for platinum, which Edison needed for his new electric light.

Major McLaughlin became immediately interested in mining propositions in Butte County and succeeded in interesting some of the wealthiest men in the United States in Butte County mining ventures. He effected a consolidation of all of the mining ventures operating at Cherokee. It was through his efforts that the Big Bend tunnel, which now supplies water to the Las Plumas power plant of the Great Western Power Company, was built. It was built to drain the river so that its bed might be mined, but the venture was not successful. English capital was heavily interested in Butte County properties, and a number of properties on the Magalia Ridge were opened under the direction and management of Major McLaughlin.

In 1888 and 1889 Major McLaughlin interested English capital in a project of mining the bed of the Feather River just above Oroville. It was at this time that the long rock wall in the center of the river was constructed. This wall yet remains. The plan was to confine the river in a small area near the bank, and to mine the river bed. During the early Nineties mining operations were conducted there, but the recovery of gold was not sufficient to justify the expense.

While the mine at Cherokee by reason of the manner in which it took care of its tailings was able to operate as long as operations were profitable, many other hydraulic mines in Butte County were closed in the first years of the decade because of the fact that the slickens from the mines were filling the Feather

River and other streams, thus raising the water level and making the danger of floods more imminent. The most important centers of hydraulicking were about Oroville and Cherokee.

## NEW INDUSTRIES START

The prosperity of Oroville was decreased by the enforced cessation of mining, and the business men were forced to look elsewhere for industries that would take its place. In this manner the orange and olive industries in Butte County were started. At this time the Thermalito and Palermo Colonies were established. The first commercial orange grove was planted in Thermalito by the Oroville Citrus Association, made up of Oroville business men. The first olive grove was planted by the late Superior Judge John C. Gray, and was the well known Mt. Ida grove at Wyandotte.

Another effect of the cessation of hydraulic mining was to drive miners back into the hills and drift or gravel mining received renewed attention. This was particularly true along the Magalia Ridge. Many of the old camps that had been deserted since the Fifties became active again. Phenomenal yields are recorded in the mines near Magalia during this period.

## A PRESIDENTIAL VISIT

On September 23, 1880, President Hayes, who was then touring California, and his party visited Chico at the invitation of General Bidwell. The occasion was a gala one for Butte County. The residences of Chico were gaily decorated, and elaborate preparations had been made for the entertainment of the party at Bidwell mansion by General and Mrs. Bidwell. The party included President and Mrs. Hayes, General Sherman, and a number of other notables. There was a parade, addresses of welcome, responses by President Hayes and General Sherman, and an elaborate reception in the evening at the Bidwell mansion. The following day the party visited the Spring Valley Mine at Cherokee. President and Mrs. Hayes were taken over the property, and Mrs. Hayes was presented with a handful of amalgam from the riffles, estimated to contain about \$200 in gold. General Sherman amused himself with playing a monitor against a face of the cliff. The day was greatly enjoyed.

The alleged procrastination of Congress in dealing with matters of Chinese exclusion resulted in a revival of agitation against the Chinese in the county. In 1886 the protest became very widespread. It started in Chico and spread to other parts of the county. The Chico Anti-Chinese Association was formed and all persons employing Chinese labor were ordered boycotted. This agitation, however, was free from violence.



In 1882 Professor H. G. Hanks, of the State Mining Bureau, made an investigation of the discovery of diamonds in Butte County. He verified the reports of the discovery of diamonds. In all, about 300 diamonds have been found in Cherokee.

## CHICO STATE NORMAL SCHOOL

The establishment of the Chico State Normal School marks an epoch in educational matters in Northern California. The establishment of this school was assured by a bill passed in the State Legislature in 1887, providing for the establishment of a normal school in Northern California. There was a keen rivalry for the school. To secure the school it was necessary that a site be offered. General Bidwell was in the East, but immediately telegraphed back offering as a site any place on the Rancho Chico "except my dooryard." Chico won the decision. When the telegram was received announcing that Chico had won the school, whistles were blown, bells rung, and there was a general jollification. In September, 1889, the school was formally opened.

In 1888 the people of North Point desired a postoffice. The Postoffice Department refused to accept that name and accordingly "Cohasset," which means in the Indian dialect "a grove of pines," was selected as the name.

## FROM 1890 TO 1900

Just as the decade from 1880 to 1890 had seen a slight decrease in population, so the census of 1900 showed a smaller population in the county than that of 1890. In the neighborhood of Oroville an increase in population was shown owing to the development of the citrus and olive industries. The total figures for the county, however, were disappointing, showing a population of 17,117 against a population of 17,839 in 1900.

The decade, like that of the Eighties, should probably be considered as one of change and preparation. The fruit industry was increasing in importance; irrigation projects on a large scale were being discussed; a start was made in the development of the hydro-electric resources of the county. It was also in the early years of this decade that E. J. Yard, chief engineer for the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, made a trip through the Feather River Canyon and determined that if the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad ever extended to the Pacific Coast, it would be through the Feather River Canyon. The next decade this trip bore fruit in the construction of the Western Pacific Railroad, which gave to Butte County another transcontinental railroad system. The last two years of the decade also saw the beginning of the gold dredging that during the early years of the new century assumed

such mammoth proportions about Oroville that it brought mining engineers and mining men from all parts of the world to Butte County to study and acquaint themselves with the new method of gold mining. Thus while the decade, considered only from the point of view of census figures, was one of retrogression, in reality the forces were gathering for the wonderful industrial expansion that was ushered in by the new century.

The Thermalito and Palermo Colonies had started irrigation upon a large scale in Butte County. During the Nineties the subject of irrigation received constantly increasing attention. It is true that almost every project undertaken was a failure. But they prepared the way for later and more successful irrigation systems. They had the further effect of educating the mind of the people of the county to the fact that the agricultural development of the county was largely bound up in irrigation.

## IRRIGATION DEVELOPMENT

During the last two years of the Eighties, Thomas Fleming, who lived at Biggs, had conceived the plan of irrigating the Gridley and Biggs section by diverting water from the Feather River at a point on the west bank of the Feather River below Oroville. He organized a company and arranged for a water appropriation, and in 1891 the surveys for this system were under way. Fleming was a man of large vision, but had not had experience in financing projects of the size contemplated for the irrigation system. He made but little progress in interesting capital and no progress in construction. He did, however, do a vast work in interviewing landowners, educating them in the value of irrigation, and convincing some of them at least that irrigation from the Feather River was both practicable and feasible.

The development of the olive industry about Oroville had assumed sufficiently large proportions to justify the erection of olive oil mills. In 1900 at the exposition in Paris, Butte County in an international competition was awarded the grand prize for the finest olive oil displayed there. This olive oil was made and exhibited by the Ekman-Stow Company.

By elaborately staged citrus fairs given during the latter years of the Eighties and early in the Nineties attention was attracted to the citrus industry of Northern California. The increased acreage in fruit was reflected in the construction of canneries to take care of the fruit output of the various orchards. In the previous decade a cannery had been built at Chico. In 1896 a cannery was opened in Gridley, and another cannery was started the same year in Biggs.

## THE OLIVE INDUSTRY

It was during the last year of this decade that Mrs. Freda Ehmann and her son, E. W. Ehmann, established in Oroville a plant for processing ripe olives. Experimenting upon the back porch of her home in Oakland with two half barrels, Mrs. Ehmann had solved the problem of processing the ripe olive so that it was attractive to buyers. The industry expanded quickly and has not only made Mrs. Freda Ehmann one of the famous women of America, but Butte County has shared largely in the prosperity that this industry has occasioned. Previous to the time that the Ehmann plant was built, all the olives grown in Butte County were used in the manufacture of oil. The establishment of the ripe olive as a commercial product opened up a new and profitable avenue for the sale of olives and resulted in a large increase in the acreage planted to olives. The story of the establishment of the ripe olive industry by Mrs. Ehmann shows how large oaks from little acorns grow, and teaches that opportunity to accomplish big things is often closer to us than we realize.

## GOLD DREDGING

Another huge industry that developed in Butte County beginning in this period was that of gold dredging. Mr. W. P. Hammon was a nurseryman living on the Feather River east of Biggs. One day, as a well was being dug upon his place, he noted there were flecks of gold in the dirt. The idea occurred to him that if machinery could be devised to handle enough of the dirt at a low enough cost, a fortune could be made. Previous to this time dredge mining had been started in a very small and limited way in New Zealand, but the industry had assumed no importance. Mr. Hammon interested other men in his idea and a gold dredger was built. The dredger was successful from the first and the industry largely developed about Oroville. The success in the Oroville field resulted in other areas of mining ground being developed, and soon the industry had spread from Butte County about the world. For years gold dredging poured millions in gold into the treasure box of the Nation.

Forbestown, which during the Fifties had been one of the big mining camps of the State, again came into prominence in the Nineties, when large quartz mines were opened there.

## AN ERA OF EXPANSION

The period from 1900 up through 1918 was one marked by a tremendous industrial development in Butte County. Great enterprises involving enormous investments of capital were launched,

and every part of the county felt the stimulus of the forward movement. Butte County leaped into prominence as one of the richest counties of the State, and the diversity of its resources attracted widespread attention and interest. While dredge mining grew to enormous proportions during this period, yet as a whole the new enterprises established were of a more permanent nature than mining. Irrigation had unlocked a treasure far exceeding in value the untold millions that the golden gravels of Butte County had given to the world. As a consequence the twentieth century witnessed an unprecedented agricultural development.

During the early years of the century the dream that had been dreamed almost since the days of the white occupation of the county became a reality and a great railroad system was built down the Feather River Canyon. This brought to the rich valley lands a new method of getting their products to the Eastern market.

The period was one of tremendous lumbering activity. The Diamond Match Company established its mammoth plant at Chico and Stirling City. And the construction of lumber mills along the Feather River followed the construction of the railroad.

The period was also one of great power development. The Big Bend Tunnel—a failure as a mining enterprise—became a success as a power project, and through the construction of the Las Plumas plant of the Great Western Power Company and smaller plants elsewhere in the county Butte County became one of the leading counties of the Nation in the production of hydro-electric power.

The era can be called one of expanding interests. Indeed the whole life of the county was reanimated. Its cities were transformed. The spirit of progress with which the very air was charged speeded up civic improvements. In less than two decades the people saw the county advance to a place of power, prestige and influence among the counties of the State.

It may be well to briefly state some of the factors that resulted in this great growth, for often we overlook the importance of the things that are near at hand and we become so accustomed to them that we fail to realize their importance.

The period was one of great railroad construction. We have already spoken of the construction of the Western Pacific and its importance. In the first decade of the new century the Northern Electric, which is now known as the Sacramento Northern Railroad, was built, first from Chico to Oroville and later to Marysville and Sacramento. The Butte County Railroad was built up the Magalia Ridge to bring lumber from the Stirling City plant of the Diamond Match Company to its Chico plant. The Butte and Plumas Railroad was built to Berry Creek to bring lumber to the sawmill at Oroville. The latter was merely a logging railroad,



but the others carried freight and passengers, and with the Central and Southern Pacific Companies' railroads gave to this county as good transportation facilities as could be found in the State. Roads, whether railroads or highways, are of tremendous importance in the development of a country. They enable the farmer and manufacturer to move their products easily and cheaply. They bring travelers into the country they serve and thus acquaint people with it and its resources and create an interest in the country. So that the development of the railroad systems in Butte County was an event of the greatest importance.

When the Diamond Match Company established its large plant in Chico, one of the largest in the State, a huge payroll was given to Chico which promoted the business prosperity of the city. The subdivision of the Bidwell lands resulted in many people coming there to farm and grow fruit upon the rich soil of that district.

Irrigation also developed on a large scale. The Butte County Canal system (now the Sutter-Butte Canal) which had been dreamed of by Thomas Fleming, became an actuality under the direction and the management of Duncan C. McCallum, of Oroville. Later the Western Canal was projected by Mr. McCallum, S. J. Norris and Carleton Gray, all of Oroville, and it was later constructed by the Great Western Power Company. The Forbestown Ditch System was rehabilitated by T. F. Hornung. An irrigation district was organized at Paradise and a fine irrigation system built there.

The Western Canal and the Sutter-Butte Canal made possible the development of a mammoth rice industry. The construction of the latter named canal resulted in a great increase in the population in and about Gridley.

Millions of dollars was spent in the development of hydroelectric power.

## THE U. S. PLANT GARDEN

In 1904 the United States Plant Introduction Gardens were located in Butte County, a short distance from Chico. This was an event of national importance. The purpose of the gardens was to secure land where the United States Department of Agriculture might test trees and plants sent in from other countries, to determine whether they could be grown in the United States and whether their growth would be desirable and profitable. Many localities sought to have the gardens located in their midst. But after a nation-wide investigation to determine the best site, Butte County was chosen.

These gardens have been the scene of some most important experiments. Plants and seeds from every part of the world have been assembled there and their adaptability to the United States

tested by being planted and grown there. The United States is richer by many new plants and trees because of this institution. It is interesting to note how the Plant Gardens secure these plants. The United States Department of Agriculture employs men who are known as "agricultural explorers," who travel over the world studying the trees and plants of other countries. When they find a tree or plant that gives promise of being valuable it is sent to the United States Plant Gardens and there planted and thus its adaptability to the United States shown.

The period had been one of great diversification of crops. With the coming of irrigation, the growth of alfalfa and dairying became important industries in the county. Durham became one of the principal almond producing sections of the State. The rice acreage grew to enormous proportions. Thousands of acres were planted to fruit. So important did the rice industry become that the United States Department of Agriculture established a rice experiment station between Biggs and Richvale to assist in the development of this industry.

Butte County was also given signal recognition when in 1917 the State of California selected Durham as the site of the first State Colony. Durham was selected after the consideration of many communities throughout the State.

In order to more effectively carry on public improvements the larger communities in the county incorporated. Chico had incorporated in 1873. In 1903 Biggs incorporated. Gridley followed in 1905, and Oroville in 1906. During the last two years of the period under discussion, Chico enlarged its boundaries by annexing its thickly settled outlying suburbs.

## THUS BUTTE COUNTY GREW

This is the story of the growth of Butte County as you know it today. You will realize possibly more than you did before the years of effort and thought, the huge expenditures and the vast energy that have gone into the building of the county, and of which you are the beneficiaries.

The story is that of the growth of American institutions and of an American community. And of all the rich legacies that those who have built up this commonwealth have left us the best is a reverence for free institutions. The greatest honor that has ever come to Butte County is that when this Nation entered into the great world war its people responded most magnificently to the call for sacrifice and service that the war brought with it. To the glory of the young manhood of Butte County, be it ever remembered that Butte County was one of the three counties of the State and the only large county in which so many young men volunteered for service that when the first draft was made Butte County was declared exempt from its provisions.

The boys and girls of today of Butte County will be the men and women of tomorrow. You are the beneficiaries of the struggles and the sacrifices, of the thought and the efforts of thousands of men and women who have gone before you. In a few years you must take up the burden of the well-being of the county. Be inspired by the glorious history of your county, by the record of its mighty accomplishments, by the unselfish service of noble men and women, to dream mighty dreams and to accomplish mighty things in the future. The greatest thing in life is service. To serve in some form or other, and to make the world a little better because we have lived in it, is the opportunity that comes to all. To most of you this opportunity will come in your home and in your county. Carry on the great work that others have handed to you.

# GENERAL BIDWELL

## PIONEER AND BUILDER

John Bidwell was born in Chautauqua County, New York, in 1819. When he was but a lad, his parents moved to Darke County, Ohio, then almost a wilderness. As a child he was a pioneer and it was as a pioneer that he spent the greater part of his life.

As a boy John Bidwell began to manifest the marvellous determination which became possibly his leading character. For instance, he walked three hundred miles to the Ashtabula Academy, where he took a scientific course, which included civil engineering. Returning to his home, he felt the ambition to enter a wider field. He started on foot to Cincinnati, ninety miles distant. His outfit consisted of \$75 in money, the clothes he wore and a few others, strapped to a knapsack strapped on his shoulders. From Cincinnati he went down the Ohio River by steamboat to the Mississippi, up the Mississippi to St. Louis, and from St. Louis to Burlington, Iowa. Here he met Governor Robert Lucas of Ohio, who advised him to go into the interior and take up a tract of land.

So young Bidwell next found himself in Platte County, Missouri. On his arrival there his money was spent and he secured employment teaching school. In the fall he located and obtained partly by purchase a tract of 160 acres. The following summer, 1840, the weather was too hot to do much work on the place during the vacation. Accordingly he went to St. Louis to obtain needed supplies of books, clothing and so forth. The trip was nearly 600 miles by water and took nearly a month, going and returning. This is what General Bidwell says of the trip:

"The trip proved to be a turning point in my life, for while I was gone a man jumped my land. Generally in such cases public sentiment was against the jumper, and it was decidedly so in my case. But the scoundrel held on. He was a bully, had killed a man in another county, and everybody seemed to be afraid of him. Influential friends of mine tried to persuade him to let me have eighty acres, half of the claim, but he was stubborn, and said that all that he wanted was just what the law allowed him. Unfortunately for me he had the legal advantage."

The General forfeited all of the work that he had done, the money that he had spent upon the place, pulled up his stakes, and resolved to go elsewhere when the spring opened.

### FIRST NEWS OF CALIFORNIA

In the meantime Bidwell had become acquainted with a French trader, Roubideaux, who had traded from Mexico up the



Pacific Coast into what is now California. Roubideaux gave such glowing accounts of the country, its boundless fertility, its glorious climate, that the ardor of young Bidwell was set aflame, and he at once determined to visit the wonderful land and see it for himself. A meeting was called and Roubideaux delivered a lecture. He laid stress upon the soil, the climate, the countless thousands of wild horses and cattle roaming the plains, and the numberless other wonders of the land. Great enthusiasm was aroused among his auditors. An organization was formed, called the Western Emigration Society. In a month about five hundred names were signed, each signer pledging himself to purchase a suitable outfit and to assemble at Sapling Grove, Kansas, on the next following ninth of May. Later, however, a letter published in a New York newspaper by a man who had a disastrous experience at Monterey, cast a damper upon the enthusiasm of many of the persons who had signed to make the trip to California.

The party, however, was organized, and left for California.

Later this party was joined by a number of missionaries en route to the Flathead Indian nation. This was the first overland emigration party that ever crossed the Rocky and Sierra Nevada Mountains. The date of departure upon the long trek was May, 1841.

Their experiences in the sun-parched deserts and among the snow-clad mountains, the hardships that they endured, constitute a glorious chapter in the great story of the winning of America's West. After six weary, heart-breaking months of trouble, on November 4, 1841, the party reached the "promised land." At the ranch of Dr. March, located 100 miles south of what is now Sacramento, they learned that at last they were in California.

Having arrived in California, the first thing that young Bidwell did was to seek employment. He learned that a man named Sutter had established a settlement about 100 miles farther north. He at once proceeded there. This was General Sutter, whose fame will continue to shine more brightly as long as the early history of California is written. The settlement that he had founded is now the city of Sacramento. Early in 1841 he had purchased from the Russian-American Fur Company at Bodega and Fort Ross all of the property they were unable to move when they abandoned the country. On Bidwell's arrival General Sutter engaged him to go to Bodega to take charge of the transfer of property from that place. Bidwell was engaged in this work until March, 1843. The houses were demolished and the lumber shipped to Sacramento, as were also the livestock, plows, household furniture, utensils, muskets and cannon.

On his return to Sutter's Fort, Bidwell picketed his horses and crossed the river in a canoe. During his absence his horses were stolen by a party bound for Oregon. Procuring other horses, Bidwell, accompanied by the noted pioneer, Peter Lassen, who was

anxious to locate a good ranch, pursued the party up the Sacramento Valley to the present site of Red Bluff, where the stolen horses were recovered. On this trip he named all of the streams that flow into the Sacramento from the east between Butte Creek and Red Bluff. He also made a map of the valley from his observations, which served as the actual map of the country until the actual surveys were made in later years. Thus two years before Fremont's first explorations, Bidwell explored the primeval wilderness of Northern California at a time when there was not a white man north of Sacramento.

In order to obtain a land grant in those days one had to become a citizen of Mexico, to which country California then belonged. In 1844 Bidwell and General Sutter went to Monterey, and while there Bidwell was granted Mexican citizenship. Also he was given a ranch, known as Ulpinos, now in Solano County. On this site he attempted to found a town, but the venture was unsuccessful. While on the trip to Monterey Bidwell and Sutter learned of a contemplated revolution, and informed Governor Micheltorena of the fact. The insurrection developed. General Sutter and Bidwell, with a party of Americans and Indians, joined the Governor's cause and pursued the insurrectionists to a point near the present city of Los Angeles, where a battle was fought. In this battle the insurrectionists were victorious. Governor Micheltorena, Sutter and Bidwell were taken prisoners, but the two latter were soon released, and returned to Sutter's Fort. In March, 1845, General Bidwell received a grant of land in what is now Colusa County, but he sold his grant.

Upon receipt of the news of the Bear Flag episode, Bidwell led a reconnaissance in the direction of Castro's supposed movements, and a few days later proceeded to Sonoma, where he was made a member of a committee to draft a plan of organization. There he prepared a paper for signatures, to the effect that "The undersigned hereby agree to organize and to remain in service as long as necessary for the purpose of gaining and maintaining the independence of California." This was on July 4, 1846, and on the 11th of the same month Bidwell was present at the raising of the American flag over Sutter's Fort. From this time until the close of the war with Mexico he was in active service. He was successively appointed lieutenant, captain, quartermaster with rank of major.

### EARLY ACTIVITIES

At the close of the war young Bidwell was engaged in numerous activities. He took the first census of that portion of the Sacramento Valley north of the Buttes, showing the white population to be 82 and the estimated Indian population to be 19,500. He drew up the contract between Sutter and Marshall for the erection of the sawmill where Marshall afterwards made his discovery of gold. He was engaged also in surveying numerous land grants

in the valley. He established a home for himself on Little Butte Creek, building a log house and planting vines and trees.

In 1848 Bidwell carried the first authentic news of Marshall's gold discovery to San Francisco. During the same year he discovered gold on the Feather River at Bidwell Bar. He was engaged for two years in mining. He purchased the property known as Rancho Chico, originally belonging to William Dickey, and erected a log house there in the summer of 1849.

The years following were full of excitement. He was a member of a constitutional convention, and represented the Sacramento district, which then comprised all the State north of Sacramento, in the first Senate. He was on the committee on county names, and named many of the counties not having Indian names. He was one of the commissioners appointed by Governor Burnett in 1850 to bear to the national capital the block of gold-bearing quartz, California's tribute to mark her interest in the fame and glory of the "Father of His Country."

It was during this trip to Washington that the question of the admission of California as a state was pending before Congress. To admit California as a state would destroy the equilibrium of free and slave territory, and the measure was violently opposed, especially by the slave States.

One day in an interview with a Mrs. Crosby, Bidwell expressed his discouragement at the outlook, and stated that he believed that if the influence and support of Senator Seward could be secured, California would be admitted to the Union as a state. Mrs. Crosby was intimately acquainted with Senator Seward. She arranged a dinner to which Bidwell and Seward were both invited. So forcibly did Bidwell present to Senator Seward's attention at this dinner California's claim for statehood that Senator Seward not only voted for the admission of California into the Union, but addressed the Senate on behalf of this State.

During the decade that followed Bidwell's return from Washington, he was extremely busy in developing his great landed estate. In 1852 he built a two-story adobe house, which served as a residence and a house of entertainment for travelers along the Oregon Road.

In 1863 Bidwell was appointed Brigadier-General of the California Militia, and his alertness there was generally credited with being one of the factors that resulted in California remaining loyal to the Union. He was later elected to Congress, and in 1890 became the candidate of the Prohibition Party for President of the United States.

### FIRST PLANTINGS

From the beginning of his ownership of his ranch, General Bidwell planted trees and vines. These plantings were increased from year to year until, at the time of his death, he had over 1800

acres in fruit. Every species and every variety of fruit or vegetable that had the possibility of coming to perfection in either a temperate or semi-tropic climate was tested and the results carefully noted. An experimental orchard near his home contained at least one specimen tree of over four hundred different varieties of fruit. With his first year's ranching he began the cultivation of wheat and other grains. He tested the adaptability of almost every kind and variety of grain, and freely gave to the public the benefit of his experience. Gold medals were awarded to him at both the Paris and the New Orleans expositions for his incomparable display of grains.

He erected and operated the first water power grist mill in this section of the State. The following incident is related in 1877 in one of the local papers:

"At a quarter to 5 o'clock, the usual time for the hands to begin work, the hands were in the field two and a half miles from the grist mill; at five minutes to 5 o'clock the first header wagon brought a load of wheat to the threshing machine and was put through and sacked. The first two sacks were put into a buggy and carried to the mill, where it was put through the cleaning process and ground into flour. At half-past six o'clock we received a portion of the flour, and at a quarter before seven we sat down to our breakfast and were served with hot biscuits made from that flour."

It was from the Bidwell mill that the celebrated bag of "sanitary flour" came which, during the Civil War, was sold and resold at Austin and various other cities in the United States, and which eventually produced, after being taken to the great sanitary fund fair at St. Louis, a fund of about one million dollars for the United States Sanitary Commission, which in the Civil War did the work which the Red Cross now does.

A profound interest in and concern for schools and churches marked General Bidwell's whole career. The memory of the difficulties and hardships that beset his path when he attempted to secure an education made him a sincere friend and patron of the public school system. General Bidwell gave the site for the Chico State Normal School. He also gave to the University of California a tract for a forestry school. To the city of Chico he gave the magnificent park that now bears his name.

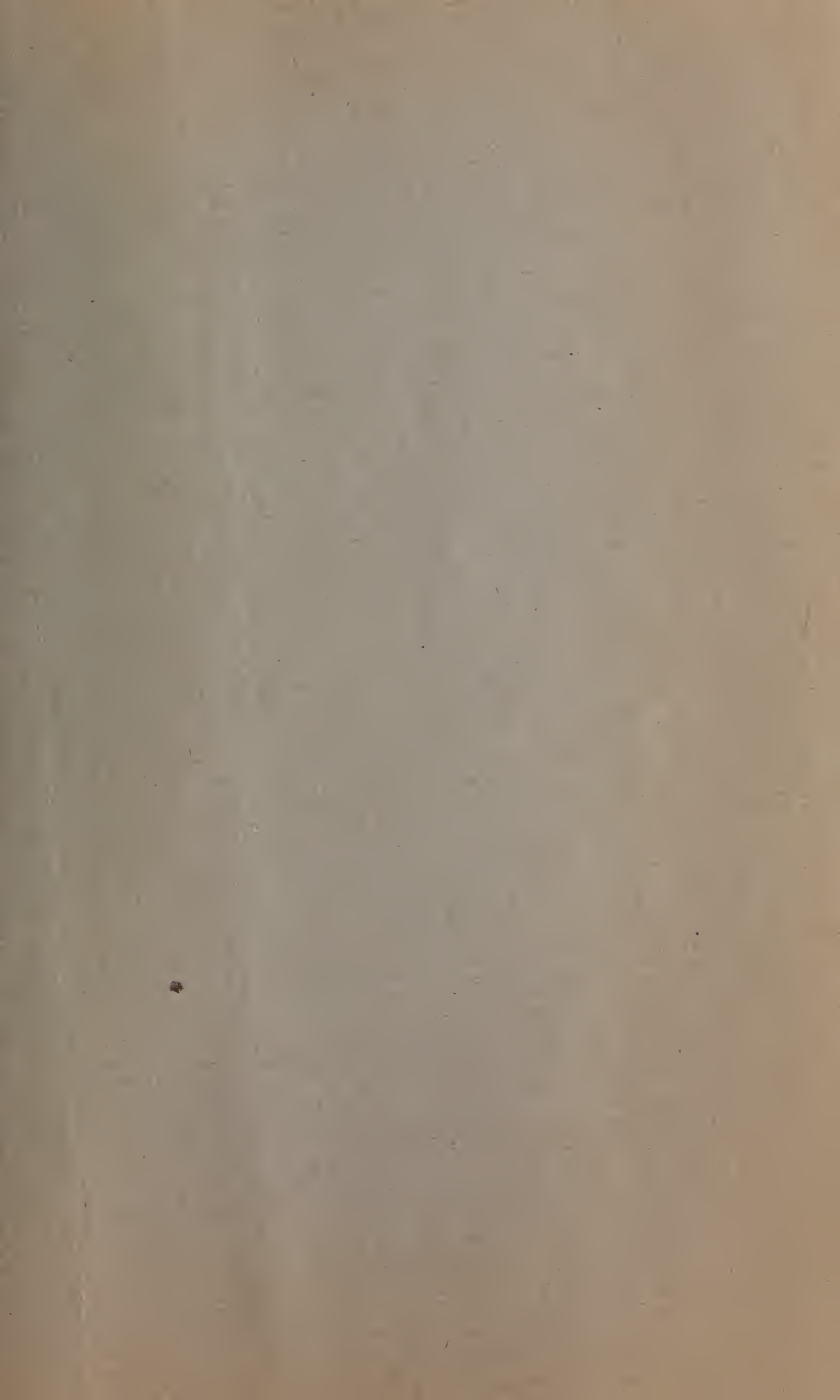
General Bidwell died on April 4, 1900. At his death the whole Nation paid tribute to the great service that he had performed.













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